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Brentwood and Oakley fastest-growing cities in Contra Costa County

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In a further sign of the rebound in home construction, Brentwood and Oakley each grew more than 2 percent last year to rank as the fastest-growing cities in Contra Costa County.

During the one-year period ending Jan. 1, Brentwood's population grew an estimated 2.6 percent to 54,741, and Oakley's increased 2.1 percent to 38,075, according to figures released last week by the state Department of Finance.

The two cities' growth is being fueled by pent-up demand as housing developments put on hold during the economic slowdown swing into motion with an improving economy.

"We see some of those starting up again," Brentwood City Manager Paul Eldredge said. "A 2.6 percent increase is not inconsistent with the growth in the number of housing units. We have developers pulling permits, (and) people buying homes and moving in."

Brentwood ranked 19th in the state in population growth, and Oakley was 35th.

Van Daele Homes is among the developers building in Brentwood.

The city's good schools, quality of life and attractive retail offerings are among the factors that led the company to build homes there, said Michael Van Daele, chief operating officer of the Southern California-based homebuilder, which moved into the Northern California market last year.

"Brentwood looked like a really strong market in Contra Costa County," he said. "Families are attracted to live in Brentwood because they can have a real quality of life (while living in an affordable home). And that's what attracted us to Brentwood."

The population growth is also welcome news for home developers in Oakley, who, like Brentwood, were forced to put residential projects on hold or severely curtail plans when the housing market collapsed seven years ago.

"Oakley has a pretty good reputation," said real estate broker John Case of the reason more people are moving to the city. "It's affordable for most people, the schools have a pretty good rating, and it's no farther out than Brentwood when it comes to the commute."

Whereas the city issued 608 permits in 2006 -- the most by far compared with the previous six years -- five years later that number had plummeted to 77.

Since then, Oakley builders have seen a significant turnaround.

After plummeting from an average of \$536,757 in August 2006 to the low \$200,000s when home prices reached their nadir in 2010, the average price of a single-family residence in March was \$316,850, according to Case.

He attributes the increase in part to Oakley's population growth coupled with a small supply of homes.

The uptick in the real estate market and home building is also good news for the city, says Oakley Mayor Randy Pope, noting that developer fees pay for installing new roads and widening existing ones as well as putting in sewer and water lines.

Elsewhere in East County, Antioch grew 1.1 percent to 106,455, surpassing Richmond as the second-largest city in the county, and Pittsburg grew 1.4 percent to 66,368.

Across the Antioch Bridge, Rio Vista grew by 3.9 percent to 7,934, making it the fastest-growing city in Solano County and eighth-fastest in the state.

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Brentwood and Oakley are the two fastest-growing cities in Contra Costa County, according to figures released last week by the state Department of Finance. Here is a look at the population totals for the four East County cities since 2010:

ANTIOCH

2010: 102,372
2011: 103,055
2012: 103,950
2013: 105,272
2014: 106,455

BRENTWOOD

2010: 51,481
2011: 52,030
2012: 52,634
2013: 53,356
2014: 54,741

OAKLEY

2010: 35,432
2011: 35,998
2012: 36,573
2013: 37,308
2014: 38,075

PITTSBURG

2010: 63,264
2011: 63,735
2012: 64,779
2013: 65,435
2014: 66,368